

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

7/15/03

(Relates to Item #1 – Revised motion)

During the past 30 years, cable television has become an increasingly significant part of the overall media mix available to consumers. As over-the-air commercial TV channels curtail their own news and public affairs commitment, dedicated cable channels for public-access, educational and governmental (PEG) programs have stepped into the breach and are rapidly becoming a vitally important source of information about local government and civic life.

Through an arrangement with KLCS, a channel licensed to the Los Angeles Unified School District, the County of Los Angeles currently buys time to broadcast the weekly Board of Supervisors meetings. This arrangement is inadequate, however, because we are unable to broadcast the meetings live; meetings of the Board are not televised until 10:00 pm the day after they take place. This time delay is inconvenient for viewers, limits our audience and reduces the public’s ability to obtain information and otherwise participate in the County decision-making process.

In addition, there are many County services and programs available to constituents that are worthy of publicizing via cable television, ranging from social

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service eligibility and tax and permit assistance to recreational opportunities and cultural activities.

The County of Los Angeles would benefit greatly from uniform Countywide dedicated channels for public access, educational and governmental programming. As a local franchising authority the County is entitled to require that cable operators make channels available for these purposes when granting or renewing their franchise operating agreements. However, we are hampered by the fact that we only have franchising authority over the various disconnected pockets of unincorporated areas in which only about 10% of County constituents reside. While the County does require our own cable franchisees to set aside PEG channels serving these areas, we have no control over franchises in incorporated cities where the other 90% of County residents live.

The City of Los Angeles comprises about 38% of County residents and is about to undertake a cable television franchise renewal process. As a dedicated County channel would be beneficial to all County residents, including those who live within the City of Los Angeles, we should work with City officials to secure the use of cable channels citywide for County use. The City is now undertaking a “needs assessment” survey to ascertain what programming services city officials and local communities want to be incorporated in the franchise renewals. The County should respond to the needs assessment by asking the City to take all steps necessary to dedicate a channel for County use.

Many of the other 87 cities in the County may be interested in providing unused channel capacity to the County or in negotiating for the provision of such channels through upcoming franchise negotiations. Cable operators may be interested in working

with the County on development of a County channel as a way of strengthening their appeal to local audiences. And, other media and communications organizations may have an interest in partnering with the County in this venture.

I, THEREFORE MOVE THAT the Board of Supervisors send a five-signature letter to City of Los Angeles officials including the Mayor, the City Council President, the Chairman of the City Council's Information Technology and General Services Committee, and the President of the Board of Information Technology Commissioners requesting that development of a dedicated channel for County-related programming and public-service information be included in its cable television needs assessment survey and its upcoming cable television franchise renewal process; and

I FURTHER MOVE that all 88 cities in Los Angeles County be requested to partner with the County in the development of a Los Angeles County governmental channel, and that the Chief Administrative Officer and the Consumer Affairs Department be instructed to work with the cities, beginning with the City of Los Angeles, and with interested cable television operators and other media and communications interests in furtherance of this aim; and to report their progress to the Board in ninety days.

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